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Trump Ally Roger Stone Scrambling to Create Election Day Operation

by LEIGH ANN CALDWELL

Controversial Donald Trump ally Roger Stone has vowed to check the validity of the presidential election results by setting up what he describes as his own exit-polling operation outside of select precincts around the country on Election Day. Stone calls it "a monumental undertaking" and one that he claims could either validate or call into question the outcome on November 8.

Stone is attempting to recruit at least 3,000 volunteers to fan out to "several thousand" hand-picked voting precincts around the country that he and his team have determined to have the highest risk of faulty results. But Stone is far from that goal with just 12 days until the election, having recruited 1,200 people.

Trump, who is down in most polls, has been hyping the possibility of a "rigged" election on the campaign trail for weeks now, saying that he might not accept the outcome should he lose.

Stone said that with his operation, he is planning to provide the evidence - or lack thereof - of any fishy voting results. He claims that if his exit polls are within a two percent margin of error of the certified results, then his opinion, the election can be trusted.

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Major media outlets also conduct exit polls through a consortium. Those are paper-and-pencil surveys that are randomly given to voters leaving their polling places. The national exit poll is conducted in 350 precincts across the country where 25,000 voters are interviewed.

When asked if there will be a difference between his exit poll and the media consortium, Stone said the "methodology will be the same."

While Trump has focused his complaints on the possibility of voter fraud, Stone said he is less concerned with fraud, which might change only a few votes, than the possible tampering of electronic voting machines, which he said could tip an election.

Stone is not a paid adviser to Trump, but he has been one of Trump's longest on-again and off-again confidantes. Throughout Trump's presidential campaign, Stone has warned of his concern over hacked voting machines, writing about the issue more than a year ago.

Stone told NBC News Tuesday that his exit poll operation is "a monumental undertaking" that has been in the works for "many, many months" and one that he is devoting all of his time to with days to go in the campaign. He said he will be training every volunteer to comply with electioneering and

polling place laws in each of the states.

"I'm interested in interviewing voters to take a scientifically valid exit poll," he said.

Stone, prone to conspiracy theories, has a history in controversial elections. He played a role in the recount in Florida between Al Gore and George W. Bush by leading protestors to a Florida recount office, causing a stoppage in the process, a move that was widely viewed to have helped Bush.

Stone insists that he is not going to deploy election monitors, which critics fear will intimidate voters, insisting that what he is doing is "not poll watching, it's not voter intimidation. It's simply an exit poll."

"There's a distinct difference between poll watching and exit polling," Stone adds.

But election watchdogs are concerned with Stone's effort.

"The last time I checked, when you conduct an exit poll it has to be done in a neutral and scientific way that purports with scientific standards on the way you approach participants to the way you frame your questions," said Dale Ho, the director of the Voting Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union.

Stone insists that he will follow strict exit poll guidelines and has said in other interviews that while he doesn't yet have the questions determined, he has gathered a team of political scientists, IT people and "at least two pollsters" who are "putting on the finishing touches."

"You're asking a neutral questionnaire, you're not wearing a Donald Trump hat, you are making it clear that you are doing a privately exit poll and then you feed all that info into a computer and you compare it to the results immediately after the polls closed," is how Stone described the process to NBC News.

Still, Ho, says that exit polling is a complicated art.

"I don't know if there's some kind of hard and fast rule between the results of the exit poll and the official (election) results that mean the official results were flawed. It could be that the exit poll was flawed," Ho said.

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Stone told NBC News that he's recruiting "mostly online," and that recruitment extended to a right-wing internet talk show. Stone told Alex Jones of InfoWars Tuesday, who is a popular conspiracy theorist and Trump supporter who has espoused anti-Semitic and racially controversial comments, that, "we need an army of InfoWar warriors." Jones said he envisions a "massive, massive, massive landslide for Trump" on Election Day.

Stone won't detail yet where his volunteers will be stationed throughout the country. He denies that the racial makeup of the voters in a given location is a determining factor but that single-party dominance is, adding that problems tend to happen in areas where one party has control of the local government. On Jones' program, he mentioned that Clark County, Nevada, a battleground county that is home to Las Vegas, will have exit poll questioners.

He's directing people to the website Stop the Steal, which is run by the group Vote Protector. Interested volunteers must give their name, email addresses, state and congressional district to sign up. The volunteer is then guided on how to continue with the process. But Stone has less than 12 days to put it all together and has a long way to go to meet his goals.
